

Mr. Speaker, I rise to commend the exemplary efforts of the United States Coast Guard, along with many State and local agencies, for their rapid response and flawless execution in rescuing 134 ice fishermen from an ice floe off the coast of Lake Erie on Saturday.

The call for help came in to the Coast Guard at approximately 10:45 a.m. By early afternoon, everyone was rescued. One man, sadly, who had fallen into the water, later suffered a fatal heart attack, and our sympathy goes out to his family.

Saturday's heroic rescue is a testament to the cooperation of various units: The Coast Guard stations in Toledo and Marblehead, Ohio; Detroit, Traverse City, Belle Isle, and St. Clair Shores, Michigan; and even Elizabeth City, North Carolina.

The Coast Guard cutter Mackinaw; the Ottawa, Ohio Sheriff's Department; the Ohio State Highway Patrol; Monroe County, Michigan Sheriff's Department; Jervis, Carol, and Washington townships; Toledo Life Flight; the Canadian Coast Guard; and, yes, countless local citizens.

I wanted to take this opportunity to call attention to their heroism and outstanding deeds. Hundreds of families, thousands of people, are grateful to them for their actions that prevented a real catastrophe.

My constituents rely on the tireless efforts of the Coast Guard and law enforcement to protect America's fourth sea coast along our Great Lakes. The partnership between all levels of law enforcement and seamless communication between these agencies are critical for my constituents who know that, in difficult times like this, there's a team of agencies that they can rely upon.

Each year, hundreds of thousands of Americans and Canadians venture into Lake Erie to participate in the region's rich sports fishing industry. Estimates show each year, the sports fishing industry on Lake Erie alone contributes up to \$700 million toward our local economy. This backbone to the local economy would not exist without the capable support of first responders.

I would like to commend in particular Ottawa County Sheriff Robert Bratton, Lucas County Sheriff James Telb, the Coast Guard, and other local law enforcement officials, for their

vigilance in protecting our fishermen from this danger.

In addition, I would like to commend local officials on efforts to develop a system in quantifying the dangers related to ice floes and educate fishermen on the dangers of ice fishing.

As our country faces the challenges of updating law enforcement to confront the challenges of the 21st century, we should look inward at the expertise of these local officials. For generations, it has been the Coast Guard and local law enforcement that has protected sailors, fishermen, and boaters from our region from these dangers.

I will submit for the *Record* the activities of a number of Coast Guard employees for their work in coordinating rescue operations. Their expertise and heroism must be properly commended.

And it is a tribute at the highest order to read into the *Record* the names of those who participated in this rescue effort: Petty Officer Jason Rice, Sector Detroit; Petty Officer Chad Pietszak, Station Marblehead, coxswain; Petty Officer Jason Venema, Station Marblehead, crewman; Petty Officer Aaron Pitney, Station Toledo, rescue swimmer; Coleman Selm, Air Station Detroit; and Public Affairs Chief Robert Lanier.

It is a tribute of the highest order to recognize these exceptional service members whose devotion to duty exemplifies America's real homeland security.

Thank you.

1. OS1 Jason Rice, Sector Detroit, Command Center: As the lead Operational Controller, Petty Officer Rice initiated a Safety Broadcast prior to the event to warn fishermen. He received notification of the event, dispatched initial resources, and provided accurate and quick notifications up the chain of command including detailed log entries throughout the event. His recommendations, calm demeanor and professional knowledge ensured the CG dispatched the correct resources and relayed critical information to other first responder agencies. Petty

Officer Rice ensured the CG helo was immediately tasked to assist with Person In Water (PIW) & coordinated information flow on medical evacuation to the Fireland Hospital.

2. BM2 Chad Pietszak, Station Marblehead: coxswain on airboat that provided organization, communication and safe transportation during ferry operations. Petty Officer Pietszak's skilled operation of the airboat ensured 94 fishermen were safely transferred from the ice floe to the staging area with no injuries during the evolution.

3. BM2 Jason Venema, Station Marblehead: crewman on airboat that provided organization, communication and safe transportation during ferry operations. Petty Officer Venema ensured 94 passengers were safely embarked, comfortable and delivered from the ice floe to the staging area.

4. BM1 Aaron Pitney, Station Toledo: Station Executive Petty Officer and ice rescue team leader from STA Toledo. Petty Officer Pitney dispatched to scene and liaison with other first responders and law enforcement agencies. He assisted with dragging fire department's 21 foot boat hundreds of yards offshore, assisted with directing and receiving fishermen being ferried off the ice. Assisted MSU Toledo with tracking down details of sunken four-wheeler and air boat.

5. AST3 Coleman Selm, Air Station Detroit: rescue swimmer onboard Coast Guard helicopter CG6553 that participated in the medical evacuation. He performed a direct deployment double lift recovery of the PIW, and then performed CPR with the flight mechanic assisting until PIW was delivered to awaiting medical personnel at Firelands Hospital helipad. He also participated in the extensive aerial search effort, locating several stranded fishermen.

6. PAC Robert Lanier, D9 Public Affairs Chief. Within minutes of the initial report, Chief Lanier recognized the gravity of the situation and mobilized the entire external affairs division. He sent a team to the Incident Cmd Post at the scene, and personally supervised a team at the D9 office. His group aggressively released info and imagery to the media in a timely manner, and conducted numerous national media interviews, garnering extensive coverage.

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